



Creating Great Communities For All

Connecticut Chapter of the American Planning Association

February 28, 2023

Testimony regarding

**Proposed Bill No. 6633: AN ACT CONCERNING A NEEDS ASSESSMENT AND FAIR
SHARE PLANS FOR MUNICIPALITIES TO INCREASE AFFORDABLE HOUSING**

CCAPA supports this bill, which would begin a process by which municipalities will be required to develop and adopt a plan to provide for that municipality's "fair share" of affordable housing. The "fair share" is a number to be determined by a thoughtful, deliberative study undertaken jointly by OPM and Department of Housing that will consider numerous factors about developability and opportunity in each municipality. Whereas the current Affordable Housing Plan requirements of CGS §8-30j requires a plan every five years, there are no stated numerical benchmarks for communities and no enforcement mechanism. This requirement had a deadline for the first five-year plan of June 1, 2022, and the majority of municipalities have complied with this deadline, or have submitted letters to OPM providing targeted dates for completion.

While the Affordable Housing Plan requirement has generated many positive conversations about how municipalities can do more to generate housing opportunities on a local level, we have seen repeatedly that the lack of specificity and enforcement has let municipalities "off the hook" to actually achieve results. Moreover, we have seen through this process that meaningful progress at a local level on this absolutely critical issue only happens when the State Statutes require it. We have had five decades since the federal Fair Housing Act passed and five decades of evidence that Connecticut's municipalities, left to their own devices, have made little progress on revising local zoning to incentive the increase of more diverse and affordable housing supply. The three most important steps forward in increasing affordable housing supply in Connecticut over the past thirty years have been state-led, including 8-30g (Affordable Housing Appeals), 8-13m (Incentive Housing), and 8-30j (Affordable Housing Plans).

This bill takes the next step along this path which other states such as New Jersey, Washington, and California have already enacted, requiring OPM and DOH to develop, along with experts and stakeholders, a reasonable and defensible expectation for municipal production of affordable housing opportunities. Unlike other zoning mandates, the fair share approach does not specify a certain size, type, or location of these housing units, but instead leaves the path toward achieving the fair share goal up to the specific abilities and preferences of the municipality. Make no mistake - the fair share requirement will require local municipalities to revise their zoning regulations to allow for the required number of units, to locate these units in locations of their choosing and with development standards that enhance their communities. As was demonstrated recently in an independent analysis in Glastonbury, the path toward achieving a fair share level of affordable housing production can be creative and multi-faceted. There is no one-size-fits-all approach or mandate.

As with all matters of municipal planning in Connecticut, new requirements present capacity challenges. A fair share housing plan, even in a once-per-decade cycle, can be a significant logistical and financial undertaking. As with Incentive Housing and Affordable Housing Plan efforts in the past, the State should make funding available to municipalities to assist with this new task. Hopefully the Model Code and Design Development Subcommittee of the Commission on Connecticut's Development and Future will be able to contribute some model code and design guidelines to this effort. However, funding assistance would further demonstrate that the State is as serious about making real progress in expanding affordable housing in Connecticut as this bill will expect municipalities to be. This challenge is a task for all of us.

WHO WE ARE

The Connecticut Chapter of the American Planning Association (CCAPA) has over 400 members who are governmental and consulting planners, land use attorneys, citizen planners, and other professionals engaged in planning and managing land use, economic development, housing, transportation, and conservation for local, regional, and State governments, private businesses and other entities. CCAPA has long been committed to assisting the legislature and State agencies with developing and furthering responsible growth management principles. The APA is an independent, not-for-profit, national educational organization that provides leadership in the development of vital communities.

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